



Attorney General Jon Bruning

NEWS RELEASE

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Attorney General Bruning Announces Guilty Verdicts in Dawes County Murder

(Lincoln, Neb) Attorney General Jon Bruning announced that a Dawes County jury found Joseph Hotz, 26, guilty of second-degree murder in the December 2008 stabbing death of his roommate, 22-year-old Kenneth Pfeiffer of Sebastian, Fla. The jury reached its verdict Monday afternoon.

Hotz was also convicted of attempted second-degree murder in an attack at another residence; making of terroristic threats; and three counts of use of a weapon to commit a felony. He was acquitted of a fourth weapons count and an attempted robbery charge.

“Mr. Hotz is a very dangerous individual,” Bruning said. “Nebraskans will be safer with him behind bars.”

Pfeiffer, found in the off-campus residence the two Chadron State College students shared, was stabbed more than 50 times.

Hotz’s attorneys claimed that Hotz was under the influence of hallucinogenic mushrooms and believed Pfeiffer was part of a plot to kill him. They requested that Judge Brian Silverman instruct the jury on the insanity defense based on these facts. The judge refused.

Second-degree murder is a class IB felony. Hotz faces 20 years to life in prison. Second-degree attempted murder is a Class II felony, which brings one to 50 years in prison.

Use of a weapon to commit a felony is a class III felony and carries a sentence of one to 20 years. Making terroristic threats is a Class IV felony and has a maximum of five years in prison.

His sentencing hearing is at 1:30 p.m. MST, January 12 in Dawes County District Court.

Assistant Attorneys General Doug Warner and Mike Guinan handled the case.

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